


# An introduction to Neurodiversity


## Session 1- Autism and neurodiversity affirming practice

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Hampshire County Council

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# Welcome!

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## Activity 1:





**Choose a sock that appeals to you!**

**On your tables:**

- Introduce yourself
- Share why you have chosen your sock

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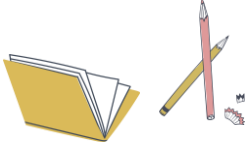
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## Neurodiversity

**In this session, we will be covering:**

- What is neurodiversity, including key terminology
- The neurodiversity paradigm - why is it important?
- Autistic led theories for understanding autistic experiences



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## What is neurodiversity?

**We are all different in how we think, feel, and learn, because our brains process information differently.**

Neuro (brain) + diversity (range of differences)  
= The natural diversity of human minds

**Growing recognition of neurodiversity in schools**

- Neurotypical → people who think and process information in a relatively similar way.
- Neurodivergent → people who think differently to those who are neurotypical.
- Neurodiversity → everyone (we all have unique brains)

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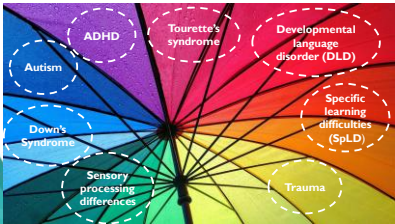
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## The neurodivergent umbrella



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## Terminology

- **Person first language (e.g., Billy has autism)**
- **Identity first language (e.g., Billy is autistic)**

UK survey of autistic people and their families: Preferred identity-first language: 'autistic' 'on the autism spectrum' Kenny et al., (2016)

“...person-first language appears to stigmatise, rather than de-stigmatise, persons with disabilities, particularly children and particularly children with developmental disabilities.” Gernsbacher (2017)

“I am a young person with autism, my autism is a part of me, but it does not define me. I know what it is like to have labels put on me” Adams (undated)

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## NEURODIVERSITY AFFIRMING LANGUAGE TO USE & NOT TO USE

Language to use	Language not to use
A neurodivergent person or a neurodivergent person	A neurotypical person
<b>Identity First Language</b> Autistic (2016) Neurodivergent person “ADHDer” Neurodivergent (2016) Neurodivergent (2016) Neurodivergent (2016)	<b>Person First Language</b> Child with autism Person with the neurodivergence Person with the ADHD Child with autism and ADHD Person with autism and ADHD
<b>Autistic / Autists</b>	<b>Autism Spectrum Disorder / ASD / On the Spectrum</b>
<b>Autistic person with...</b> current support needs and ... current strengths and abilities	<b>High Functioning / Low Functioning autistic person</b>
<b>Autistic traits</b>	<b>Red flags for autism</b>
<b>Speaking / Non-speaking</b> They communicate verbally She uses an AAC device to communicate	<b>Verbal / Non-verbal</b> They're mostly non-verbal She doesn't use verbal communication
<b>Let's use the term</b> Neurodiversity affirming and non-stigmatising	<b>Let's use the term</b> Neurodiversity affirming and non-stigmatising

Community Against Prejudice Towards Autistic People (CAPTAP)- 'How to talk about autistic ways of being'

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## Why is this important?

Our needs...

Maslow's hierarchy of needs (adapted by Rebecca Young, 2007)

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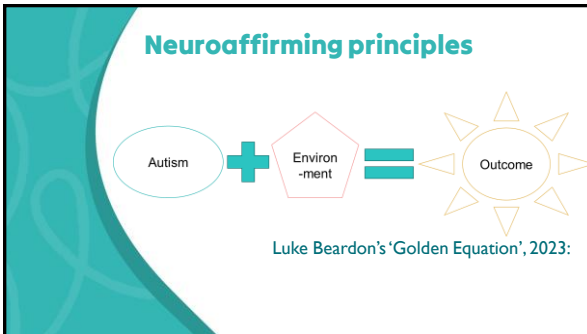
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### What does it mean to be autistic?

- Previous theories about Autism are being challenged
- Re-focus on understanding the inner experience of being autistic
- Listening to autistic lived experiences
- Two key autistic led theories
  - Monotropism
  - Double Empathy Problem (Session 2)

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## Monotropism

A different, more focused strategy for using attention



The infographic titled 'MONOTROPISM' describes 'the benefits of an all consuming hyper-focus'. It features a central spiral graphic. Surrounding the spiral are several benefits: 'helps regulate your sensory system', 'interests are predictable and reassuring', 'a wonderful flow state which makes you feel happy', 'gain deep knowledge and skills', and 'feel less stressed'. At the bottom, it says 'Follow @autisticallians'.

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## The Autistic Advocate

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qUFDAevkd3E>

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## Activity 2: Reflect and discuss

Reflect on your RP contexts:

- To what extent is neurodiversity and neurodivergence discussed with children - how is it discussed?
- How do staff discuss neurodiversity?
- What do you see in your school environment? What are the autistic experiences - how do you know?

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